

# Incirlik Airmen help bring *Relief for Pakistan*

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C-130s line the flightline at Incirlik Air Base, Turkey, Oct. 19 in preparation to move cargo to Islamabad, Pakistan. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees is using the base as an “air-bridge” to transport 860 tons of needed supplies to the region.

Photo by Tech. Sgt. William Gomez



Photo by Senior Airman Larry Reid, Jr.

Airmen from the 39th Logistics Readiness Squadron and 10th Tanker Base Command unload blankets from a United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees truck Oct. 18. The UNHCR is using the base as an “air-bridge” to transport blankets, tents and stoves to Pakistan.

With the determination of a colony of ants whose home

was destroyed, Airmen move through a maze of cargo on the flightline at Incirlik Air Base, Turkey. The mission: to provide humanitarian aid to earthquake victims in Pakistan.

It is barely more than two weeks since a devastating earthquake rocked parts of India, Pakistan and Afghanistan Oct. 8. The magnitude 7.6 earthquake left thousands dead and more than twice as many wounded.

But the loss of life did not end with the quake itself. The millions of people without homes are now at risk for hypothermia and in need of shelter as the temperatures in the region drop.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees joined forces with NATO and the Turkish government to answer the cries for help and

started airlifting hundreds of tons of needed supplies, including almost 10,000 tents, from Turkey to Islamabad, Pakistan. The supplies are from the UNHCR warehouse in Iskenderun, Turkey.

“The people are in urgent need of shelter, and of course other things,” said Metin Corabatur, UNHCR public information officer for Turkey. “We are here to save lives.”

The 39th Air Base Wing joined with the 10th Tanker Base Command and provided around-the-clock manpower as 19 truckloads of supplies arrived here at night Oct. 18 and were loaded on five C-130s from Italy, Great Britain, Greece and France. The first shipment left in the morning the next day.

“We are supporting this important mission with our Turkish partners,” said Col. David Wilmot, 39th Mission Support Group commander. “This coalition effort leverages 50 years of teaming experience between U.S.

and Turkish forces at Incirlik; it is what we do every day.”

“We have been in 24-hour operations for three days,” added Capt. Paul Cornwell, 39th Logistics Readiness Squadron operations officer. “The cargo is coming to us in trucks hand-stacked and in burlap sacks. It is time consuming to offload the trucks by hand and then turn around and build up the aircraft pallets.”

The 24-hour operation is a small part of the commitment Airmen at Incirlik have showed in moving supplies to Pakistan. They have battled keeping up with the high demand for turnover coupled with rain in the middle of the night.

“I was out last night building pallets in the rain,” said Captain Cornwell. “A burlap sack containing blankets fell off a truck, landing in a puddle and several more were about to fall out of the truck. One Airman stood up

and said, ‘These folks have lost everything they have. Let’s make sure they don’t get wet blankets.’ That simple statement summed up our dedication to getting these supplies downrange.”

The flightline is not the only area on base manning up to accommodate the demands of the mission. Helping move the cargo is an array of international NATO troops being cared for by the 39th Services Squadron. Right now, Tin City is accommodating more than 150 extra personnel.

“There are so many moving parts to this scale of an operation, it is hard to know exactly who to expect and how many people they are bringing,” said Capt. Michael Meek, 39th SVS Combat Support Flight commander. “But while they are here, we will make sure all NATO troops have a warm bed, clean sheets and a hot meal, so they can fulfill their part of the mission.”

“This is a perfect example of good people trying to make the world better,” he continued. “Although we may speak different languages and come from totally different cultures, we are all trying to help people that have been devastated by an unfortunate natural disaster. That is what makes this world a better place – helping each other when we fall on hard times.”

The mission is expected to continue for the next couple of weeks to a month, but that does not deter the determination of the men and women of Team Incirlik, according to Capt. Cornwell.

“There will be some family who we will never meet or see who have nothing but the clothes on their backs,” he said. “Getting them into one of these tents with some blankets to stay warm just might take the edge off what has happened. Hopefully, it will help them to start the rebuilding process.”



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